RANGOON — If the pro-regime Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) succeeds in ensuring that only its own candidates contest many of the constituencies in the Nov. 7 election it could face a big show of popular defiance.

One villager in Htantapin Township, Rangoon Division, said only the USDP was campaigning in his area. If the USDP candidate was the sole choice offered to voters “villagers say they won't cast their ballots,” he said.

Another villager, a resident of Tike Kyi Township, confirmed that the election would be boycotted by many voters if the USDP candidate was their own choice.

Local authorities were intimidating villagers by telling them the names and addresses would be noted of all who boycotted the poll, the villager said.

Only two parties, the USDP and National Unity Party (NUP) will field candidates in many constituencies, according to sources.

One of these is Gwa Township in Arakan State, where one resident said neither the USDP nor the NUP commanded support. “People don't know what they are going to do,” he said. “Most of them have come to think about abstaining.”

Khin Maung Swe, a leader of the National Democratic Force (NDF), said: “It seems that the Election Commission [EC] has put young political parties like us in a tight corner by asking us to submit candidate lists within two weeks, between August 16 and 30.

“It appears to be a deliberate attempt to push us to a condition where the EC doesn't want us to participate in the election.”

Khin Maung Swe said he couldn't say how many constituencies the NDF would contest, because of all the restrictions and difficulties it faced. It had originally planned on fielding about 200 candidates, he said.

The official restrictions and financial restraints meant that the NDF would mainly contest the

election in Divisions and not focus on States, Khin Maung Swe said.

Than Than Nu, general secretary of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), said the number of constituencies her party will contest has reached less than a hundred so far.

“We are far away from what we have expected to reach,” she said. “We will carefully choose local constituencies in which to contest.”

Ohn Lwin, vice-chairman No. 2 of the National Political Alliances (NPA), said political parties that had planned to contest nationwide are now in trouble as they have encountered financial constraints in paying candidate fees [500,000 kyat (US $510) per person], time limitations, EC restrictions, and surveillance and harassment by local authorities.

“I think the NPA can contest in about 20 constituencies, maximum,” he said. “We don't have enough time and money so we have to choose where we can definitely win.”

A USDP organizer in Rangoon said the party will contest the election for seats in both the Pyithuluttaw [People's Assembly] and Amyotha Hluttaw [Nationalities Assembly], as well as in regional parliaments.

The USDP has been reportedly currying favor with voters by offering low-interest loans and undertaking local improvement projects such as building roads and providing street lighting.

Led by the military regime's incumbent Prime Minister Thein Sein, the USDP registered at the EC on June 1 in order to participate in the election. The EC approved the USDP's registration on June 8.

So far, 47 political parties have applied for registration at the EC and 42 parties have been approved.